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# EGYPTIAN MUMMIES



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## SUGGESTED BOOKS

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- W. R. DAWSON, "Making a Mummy," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (Vol. 13, 1927), pp. 40 ff.
- A. LUCAS, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (3rd edition, London, 1948), chapter 12, ("Mummification").
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- I. E. S. EDWARDS, *A Handbook to the Egyptian Mummies and Coffins Exhibited in the British Museum* (London, 1938).
- R. A. MARTIN, *Mummies* (Chicago Natural History Museum, 1945).

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# Egyptian Mummies



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## EGYPTIAN MUMMIES

MUMMIFICATION as practised by the ancient Egyptians was an attempt to preserve personal identity after death. The beliefs which produced this unique art centred in the worship of Osiris, god of the dead, symbol of immortality, and the most popular among the numerous Egyptian deities. The dead came to be mystically identified with him and he was pictured as a living mummy. Two other gods were prominent in the beliefs and ritual connected with funerals: Anubis, the jackal-headed guardian of the tomb, and Thoth, the ibis-headed scribe of the gods (fig. 1).

The earliest Egyptians were simply buried with knees bent, in pit graves in the desert, where the hot dry sand was a natural preservative (fig. 2). As the gradual development of the tomb and the elaboration of wrappings isolated it from the sand the body decayed more rapidly. Thus belief in the importance of physical survival was suggested by natural processes, and mummification arose as an artificial substitute (figs. 3 and 4).

At least as early as 2700 B.C. persons of highest rank were buried extended, in close linen wrappings, and resin-soaked linen was moulded over the features. At that time embalmers used natron (a native soda) as a drying agent, removed the viscera by means of an incision, and probably also coated the body with resin. Until 1000 B.C. mummification, still virtually confined to the wealthy, became increasingly elaborate, but its essential features remained the same: desiccating the body by covering it with natron; removing and separately preserving the viscera (fig. 17); cleansing, and in later periods stuffing, the body cavities; anointing the skin and treating it with resins to preserve its form; wrapping the body in layers of bandages and shrouds. From the 18th Dynasty (1580-1340 B.C.) the brain was often removed through the nos-

trils. During the 21st Dynasty (1085-950 B.C.) packing materials, such as mud and linen, were introduced beneath the skin; artificial eyes were used; and the viscera were returned to the body cavity after being embalmed. After this period mummification declined, gradually dying out during the Roman period (30 B.C.-A.D. 324). Masks of painted cartonnage (combined plaster and linen, later also waste papyrus) were common about 2000 B.C.; later the whole mummy was enveloped in cartonnage (fig. 10), but in Ptolemaic times (332-30 B.C.) masks again became common (fig. 15), with separate units of cartonnage sewn on other parts of the body. During the late periods a bead net (fig. 16) was often spread under the cartonnage. At this time large numbers of amulets were laid on various parts of the mummy, or placed in the wrappings, for its protection (fig. 17).

Wooden coffins were used from about 3000 B.C. The rectangular form remained usual until 2000 B.C. (fig. 5). Mummiform coffins appeared at that time and became general during the succeeding periods (figs. 6 to 12). At all periods sarcophagi of stone or wood enclosed the coffin (or two "nested" coffins) of important people.

The hieroglyphic inscriptions on coffins and cartonnage are prayers and spells. They are often combined with pictures illustrating the funerary cult (figs. 7, 8, 10, 14); at an earlier period they also showed scenes from daily life.

For the owner's comfort the tomb was provided with food and drink, personal effects, both real and in replica, models of servants, and wall pictures illustrating daily life. From about 1700 B.C. there developed, as a standard part of the funerary equipment, the "shawabti," a model worker to substitute for the deceased in the forced labour of the next world (fig. 19). Shawabtis later appeared in sets contained in special boxes (fig. 20).

W.N.

## NOTES TO THE PICTURES

1. Three bronze statuettes used as household gods or as temple offerings.
2. The man was buried facing west, in the position of natural sleep and wrapped in matting. Burials of this period contained food offerings, beads and simple household objects.
3. A man, wrappings intact except for damage at the skull.
4. A man. The coffin is illustrated in figures 8 and 9.
5. Of the lady Nofret. The eyes are to allow the deceased to see out. Below is a door, also for her use. The inscriptions are an offering formula (horizontal), and spells to invoke the deities Imseti, Shu, Tefnut, and Duamutef (vertical).
6. Of a woman named Ta-khat. The inscriptions in front of the three figures are recitations by Hapy, Anubis, and Duamutef (see fig. 17).
7. Of Tety, son of the lady Ta-shemyet (?). The winged figure is the sky goddess Nut. Beside her are Isis (right) and Nephthys (left), wife and sister of Osiris. Below, Anubis is embalming the mummy.
8. Of An-tjau, son of Ankh-Hor. and the lady Tjes-Net-peret. Above is a winged figure of Nut, and to the right a ram, symbol of the creator god Khnum. Below, the mummy lies on its couch.
9. The goddess Nut, without wings (cf. figs. 7 and 8). The spaces above and below contain offering formulae.
10. Of Djed-Maat-es-ankh, chantress of Amen-Re. Horus is seen leading the deceased before the enthroned Osiris, who is attended by Isis and Nephthys; below are the fetish of the sacred city Abydos with divine standards; the boat of the funerary god Sokar; and the four sons of Horus (see fig. 17).
11. Of Pedikhons, son of Haty and Di-sy-Ast. Various deities stand before the two mummiform gods Osiris (left) and Sokar (right). Other gods and demons appear between and below the columns of text.
12. Of Ta-sheryet-Hathor, daughter of the high priest of Hermopolis Djed-Thot-ef-ankh and the lady Seta. Instead of painted decoration this coffin has an incised inscription on the plain wood. It was shaped out of a single log, originally completed with pieces dowelled to it.

13. The cow goddess Hathor, protector of the cemetery, stands before the tomb. Above, a winged serpent goddess and the "spirit" of the deceased, a human-headed bird.
14. Scene from the judgment after death: Anubis and Horus weigh the heart against a feather, symbol of Truth; Thoth stands at the left behind the deceased.
15. The face is gilded. On the lappets of the headdress are Isis and Nephthys, each with the mummy before her.
16. The beads and amulets are of "faience" (glazed siliceous ware). The beads are arranged in bands of different colours. Among the amulets are four apes (the animal of Thoth) and two *ankhs* (symbol of life). For the others see fig. 18.
17. The standard set of four receptacles to contain the viscera. During the later periods the lids represented the four protective sons of Horus: Imseti (human-headed), Duamutef (jackal-headed), Hapy (ape-headed) and Qebhsnewef (falcon-headed.)
18. Top row: *djad*, symbol of Osiris; *pesesh-kaf*, used in the revivifying ceremony at the funeral; mason's square. Middle row: double plumes; eye of Horus; frog; girdletie. Bottom row: headrest; heart; scarab beetle; papyrus sceptre. Amulets represent parts of the body, objects of daily use, sacred symbols, and hieroglyphs.
19. Left: of the lady Iwy, painted limestone, about 16th-13th century B.C. Centre: of Nefertari-mer-en-Mut, a queen of Rameses II (1298-1232 B.C.), wood covered with black varnish. Right: of a man Pa-en-Asar (?), violet-blue faience, about 12th-11th century B.C.
20. Wooden shawabti box of the lady Ta-di-Re, daughter of Hor, priest of Month, and mother of the "lord of the house" Seren.





1. Osiris (centre); Anubis (left); Thoth (right). About 6th to 3rd century B.C.  
 Heights  $7\frac{7}{8}$  ins.,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  ins.,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  ins. 910.17.15, 948.34.26, 910.17.22
2. Prehistoric burial, before 3000 B.C.  
 Length of grave 46 ins. 910.26





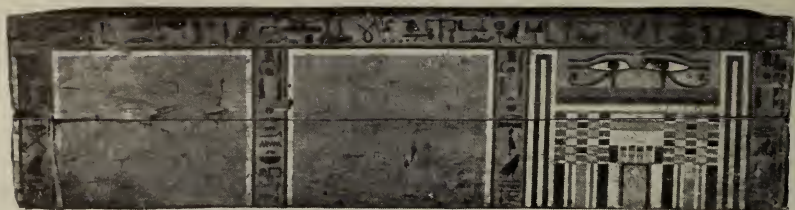
3. Mummy with wrappings almost intact, probably about 1000 B.C.  
Height about 5 ft.

910.5.3



4. Mummy lying in its coffin, with the wrappings removed from the head, about 7th or 6th century B.C.  
Height 5 ft. 1 in.

910.12.3



5. Coffin of the Middle Kingdom (2065-1785 B.C.).  
Length  $70\frac{1}{2}$  ins.

910.8

6. Coffin of the New Kingdom (1580-1085 B.C.).  
Length  $76\frac{1}{2}$  ins.

910.9



7. Coffin of about the 8th to 5th  
century B.C.  
Length 73 ins. 910.6



8. Lower part of coffin lid, about 7th or 6th  
century B.C.  
Length 75 ins. 910.12.2



9. Lid interior of coffin shown in figures 4 and 8.  
Length 75 ins.

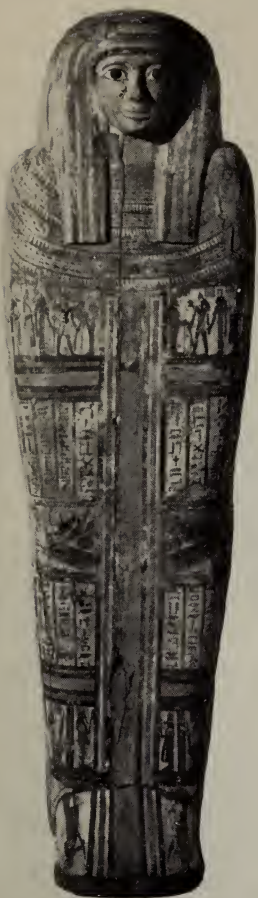
910.12.2



10. Cartonnage case of a mummy, about 7th or 6th century B.C.  
Length 65 ins.

910.10

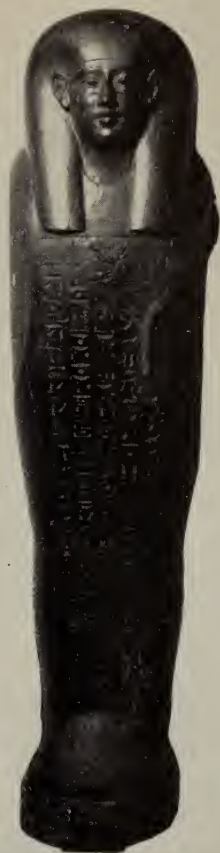




11. Coffin of about 7th or 6th century B.C.

Length 79 ins.

910.11



12. Coffin of the Ptolemaic period (332-30 B.C.).

Length 69½ ins.

910.7

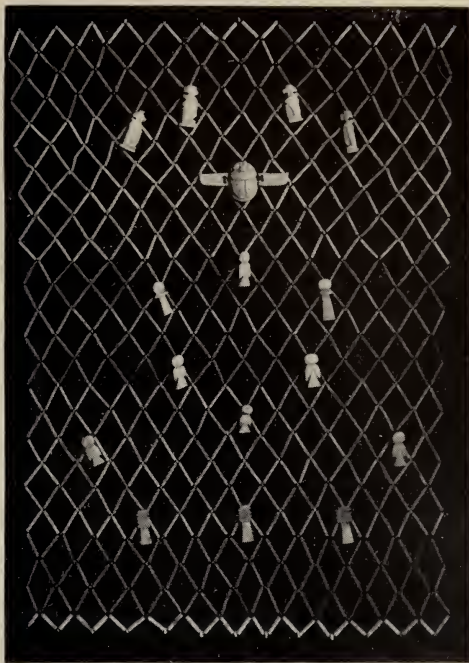


13. Detail of painted decoration from a coffin, 12th to 10th century B.C.  
Width 10 ins.

910.5

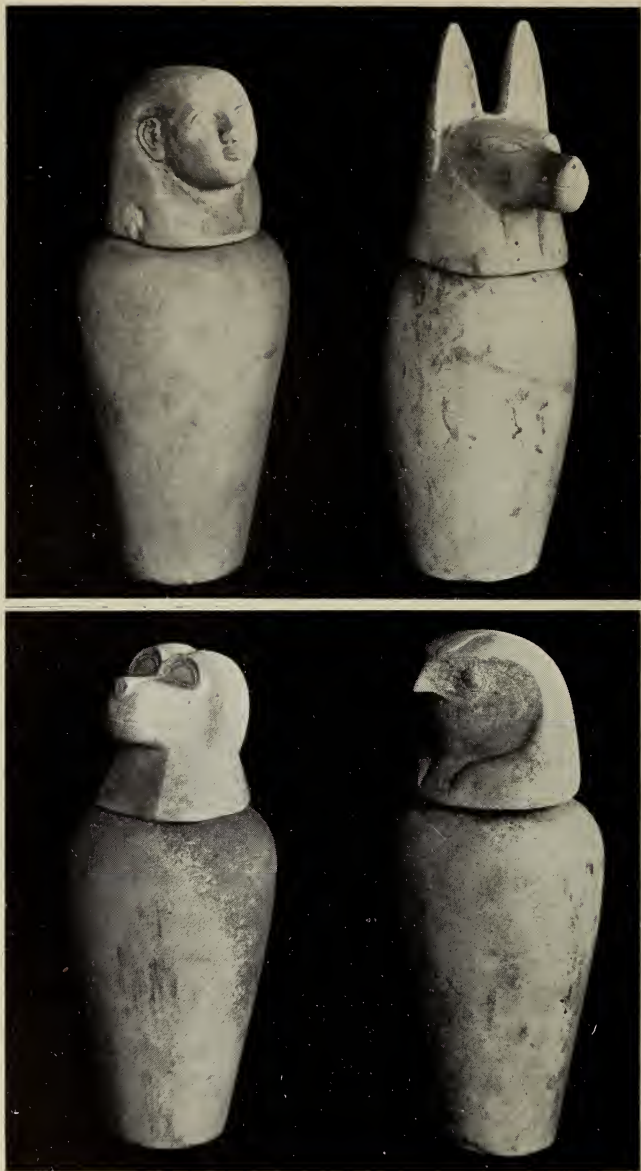
14. Detail of painted decoration from the cartonnage case shown in figure 10.

910.10



- |                                                      |                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 15. Cartonnage mask, Ptolemaic period (332-30 B.C.). | 16. Bead net with amulets, about 7th to 4th century B.C. |
| Height 18 ins. 910.15.3                              | Length 19 ins. 910.24.5                                  |





17. Limestone canopic jars, about 7th to 4th century B.C.  
Height about 12 ins. 910.1-4



18. Selection of stone and faience amulets, about 7th to 4th century B.C.

Height of largest  $1\frac{1}{8}$  ins.

910.25.1-9, 927.2.1, 948.34.149



19. Three *shawabti* figures, New Kingdom (1580-1085 B.C.).  
 Height  $7\frac{1}{4}$  ins.,  $6\frac{3}{8}$  ins.,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  ins. 910.23.3, 1, 2
20. *Shawabti* box, about 8th century B.C.  
 Length  $11\frac{1}{2}$  ins. 948.34.163.



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## PICTURE BOOKS

1. Black-Figure and Red-Figure Greek Pottery
2. Chinese Pottery Figurines
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